

Employee Performance Evaluations

Historically, communities have not conducted employee performance evaluations, a key tool in holding employees accountable that has been widely used in the private sector. It has only been in the last few years that many public sector employers started demanding accountability of their appointed managers and employees. As such, government is placing greater attention on written job descriptions with goals, performance expectations, and annual employee evaluations.

A job description should spell out clearly what is expected of an employee. It generally includes the major and minor duties and responsibilities; supervision received and given; education, qualifications, experience and special skills required; and conditions under which work is performed. Based on the job's duties and responsibilities, a supervisor (e.g., board, manager, or department head) would establish annual performance expectations in the form of measurable goals and objectives for each reporting employee. These goals and objectives serve as benchmarks, by which an employee is held accountable and the supervisor develops criteria to evaluate an employee.

Generally, an annual employee job performance evaluation is conducted in three stages. The initial stage is planning, which is conducted at the beginning of each evaluation year. The supervisor and employee meet to discuss the duties of the position and the performance expectations by which the employee is evaluated. The second stage is the mid-year progress review. During this stage, the supervisor advises the employee of his/her progress thus far and makes suggestions for improvement, if warranted. The last stage is the final evaluation. The supervisor and employee meet to review and evaluate the employee's overall performance for the year. It should be noted that every stage of this process should be documented in writing. The goals and expectations should be clear and concise and both the progress and final reviews should contain written comments.

Based on the annual evaluation at year's end, an employee may be rewarded (i.e., step increase) for a job well done and/or given suggestions if performance improvement is warranted. In the event an employee's performance is unacceptable, the community should develop procedures for implementing a corrective action or remedial plan, involving closer, more intensive supervision. This generally involves developing a written plan that identifies what actions/improvements are warranted from an employee. It also includes a deadline for when the actions/improvements are expected with frequent interim meetings to monitor progress. Failing to make reasonable improvements may result in progressive discipline, where an employee receives written warnings, then suspensions, and finally dismissal.